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President of the European Commission

**Concluding remarks to the unveiling of
the "Solidarność 1980 Esplanade" and
the "Simone Veil Agora"**

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European Parliament, 30 August 2011

Brussels, 30 August 2011

Dear President Buzek,
Madame Simone Veil,
Prime Minister Tusk, Prime Minister Letourmy,
President Borusewicz,
Minister Leonetti,
Former European Parliament President Pöhl

Dear Mr Wim Kok

Distinguished members of the European Parliament,
Ambassadors,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear friends,

Let me congratulate President Buzek and also his predecessor President Pöhl for this great initiative of having here the esplanade "Solidarność" and the agora Simone Veil.

I would like also to thank Belgium and Brussels to make this possible, and to thank all those that have contributed to such an important gesture.

For me and for millions of Europeans, "Solidarność", or Solidarity, has shown the importance of freedom for all Europe. The motto, "There is no liberty without Solidarity" remains a guiding light for Europe today. With passion, and through peaceful means, Solidarność sought freedom and not revenge; national identity and patriotism, but not aggressive nationalism. In fact Solidarność gave a great contribution to the removal of the bricks of the Berlin Wall. Without Solidarność, we would not have today the Europe, the European Union we have.

Also Simone Veil gave an important, decisive contribution for the European Union. Simone Veil is not just a witness to our history; she has been a shaper of history and also of our European institutions. She has inspired over the course of the last decades the European construction. Simone Veil has not only given a great contribution to France and also to women and the way women are respected in Europe, but also she is a testimony of the very cruel past of Europe, and I think it is important to remember that past. In fact, Solidarność and Simone Veil remind us that Europe had terrible moments. Here in Europe, we had the absolute evil that was the Shoah, racism, anti-Semitism. Here in Europe, we had totalitarian regimes where we had no freedom at all. And it is important to remind ourselves of this past, so that this past does not repeat itself in another shape. Today, when we see nationalism, when we see populism, we should be reminded that history of Europe was not always a bright history. We had some of the worst moments of the history's mankind in our continent. It is important to remember that, so that it does not happen again. It is important to honour those examples, like Solidarność and Simone Veil, to reinvigorate our passion and our determination for a united Europe. Europe made the worst in the past, but Europe also made the best and the best was the project we call now the European Union – a union based on the idea of freedom and solidarity.

Thank you!